

# The Galileo Program, University High School

## 1. Program Overview

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### Our Vision – The U.H.S. Galileo Program

*University High School Year 9 students are engaged and motivated by a challenging and stimulating program that integrates lifelong learning skills within a rich inquiry and community-based curriculum. Students are given personal and social development opportunities with guidance and encouragement from a three full time teachers who provide personalised feedback and support. The expectations within the program are high and students are encouraged to identify themselves as thinkers, lifelong learners and informed, global citizens who are capable of facing the future with resilience and confidence.*

*The program is staffed by creative teacher facilitators working as a team, generating a continually evolving program that brings energy to the school community, integrates best practice learning and realises the potential of each of its students.*

### Core Principles of Galileo

#### **The Program aims to develop students who:**

- Are independent and self-aware learners who set goals, reflect and evaluate their own progress
- Are confident to take risks with, and responsibility for their own learning
- Pose critical questions about their world and can use traditional, online and community resources to develop responses
- Work cooperatively to complete a variety of complex tasks with teams of peers
- Are socially aware, ethical, and caring global citizens
- Are connected to fellow students, staff and the school and view themselves as members of a learning community
- Are able to articulate and provide evidence for their burgeoning understandings of complex issues

#### **Teaching and learning in Galileo involves:**

- Learning through authentic tasks that require complex thought, creativity and allow time for exploration
- Students' input and decision-making about content, process and assessment
- Team processes involving cooperation, communication, negotiation and other social competencies
- Recognising and planning for individual differences in maturity, interest, achievement and learning preferences
- Flexible teacher-student-class arrangements for enhanced teacher-student knowledge and relationships
- Team-teaching and ongoing professional learning for staff
- Integration of web 2.0 technologies and 1:1 netbook resources
- Progressively increasing levels of student independence, responsibility and accountability
- Strong community partnerships and engagement in real-life issues

## 2. Program Elements

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The program is completed over one school term, lasting eight to eleven weeks, and includes the following elements:

- Weekly inquiry trails
- Skills workshops
- An extended team project including:
  - Research presentation
  - Community action project
  - Student-designed investigative trail
  - Reflective team exhibition
- Community service at local primary schools and other community organisations
- Weekly online reflective and academic written work
- Camp
- Individual student-parent conference

### **Element Descriptions**

#### **Inquiry Trails – The City as Classroom**

One of the pedagogical cornerstones of the Galileo Program is an inquiry-learning framework. Students frame their own questions and build their understanding of a range of issues relating to Melbourne through experiential and community-based activities. The investigative trails offer real-world opportunities for gathering evidence and testing hypotheses, as well as applying teamwork, leadership skills, personal and social learning.

Some of the key questions students will explore include:

- What are the histories and futures of Melbourne as a place to live?
- What global-trends can we observe on a local level in our community?
- How do we make use of our own skills and passions to participate in society and build a better world?

Using Melbourne as our classroom, students will explore a different aspect of city life each week. Themes are selected for their relevance to cohort and community. Past themes have included:

- |               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| • Justice     | • Education  |
| • Environment | • Community  |
| • History     | • Creativity |
| • Religion    | • Diversity  |
| • Art         | • Futures    |
| • Economy     | • Education  |
| • Health      | • Mysteries  |

**Skills-based Workshops**– explicit teaching and learning around key personal, social and interdisciplinary skills. Topics include thinking and research skills, first-aid, communication, team-building, ethics, leadership, interviewing, surveying, public speaking, active citizenship and resume writing.

**Team Project** – a four-part, long-term project exploring an aspect of life in Melbourne chosen by the students. The project incorporates background and in-the-field research based on student-generated questions. The project provides students with an extended opportunity to examine real-world issues in partnership with others as well as contribute to their community via an action project. At the end of the term, students will provide feedback on their own work, contributions and learning through formalised reflection, self-evaluation and presentation to an audience of teachers and peers.

**Community Service** – an ongoing opportunity to participate responsibly in an external community with the aim of making a contribution to social and community wellbeing. Placements include primary and special schools, child-care centres and charity opportunity shops.

**The Galileo Camp** – students will have the opportunity to integrate personal and social learning through participation in a camp comprising both student-led and teacher-facilitated activities. Through a variety of team-based activities, students extend their peer networks, further develop team-building, resilience and leadership skills.

**Parent-Student Conference** – individually, students will present and celebrate their learning over the term in a formal interview with parents/guardians and their teacher.

### 3. Program Structure and Organisation

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#### Weekly Structure

The timetable varies week-by-week. The basic structure is given below:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1	Year 9 Electives	Community Service/Skills Workshop	Investigative Trail	Year 9 Electives	Trail Reflection
2					
3		Theme-based Cooperative Learning		Team Project	Theme-based Cooperative Learning
4	Intro to Weekly Theme				
5	Theme-based Cooperative Learning	Team Project		Community Service/Skills Workshop	Sport/Mini Trail
6					

## **Physical resources**

The Galileo program is housed in “The Loft” and also uses other teaching spaces around the school. The use of these spaces allows for:

- Flexible formal and informal teaching and learning arrangements
- Student ownership of space
- Break-out areas for small group work
- The maintenance of a rooftop garden

The Galileo Program incorporates a 1-to-1 netbook program.

## **Staffing**

The program is staffed by three full-time teachers, who take a team approach to teaching and weekly planning. Working with approximately fifty students, the high teacher-to-student ratio allows for the development of solid and more rewarding teacher-student relationships.

## **4. Assessment**

### **Assessment in Galileo involves:**

- A commitment to engaging students in reflection on their learning
- Developing different modes of assessment reflecting the variety and interdisciplinary nature of learning and thinking
- Employing online student blogs and wikis as vehicles for self-reflection, goal setting and recording learning
- Opportunities for ongoing informal assessment through observation and discussion in home groups
- Providing meaningful opportunities for deep reflection and self-assessment through the progress reporting, end-of-term team presentation and the student-parent conference.